

The logo consists of two large, bold, black letters 'R' and 'R' with a red ampersand symbol between them. The letters have a slight 3D effect with a shadow underneath.

REASON & REVELATION

A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences

MAY 2024 • VOL. 44 • NO. 5

Does **JESUS'** Teaching **CONTRADICT** the Teaching of **MOSES?**

Why Did
Jesus
HAVE
to **Die?**

**NEW
TRACTS**

Does JESUS' Teaching Contradict the Teaching of MOSES?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Article In Brief... ?

In His masterful "Sermon on the Mount," did Jesus contrast His teaching with that of Moses' teaching? Did He indicate that His teaching would correct the flaws in the Law of Moses? Did He suggest that His law would address the human heart whereas Moses' Law addressed only the outward action? In short, do Jesus and Moses essentially contradict each other?

THE number of those who, over the centuries, have attacked the inspiration of the Bible has been legion. Yet, like an anvil, the Bible has deflected the blows leaving its inspired status unaffected. Not one discrepancy, contradiction, or error has been successfully sustained.¹ In Matthew chapter 5, a surface perusal of Jesus' remarks in His "Sermon on the Mount" causes one to question whether Jesus was disparaging the teaching of Moses in the Old Testament while affirming the superiority of His own teaching.

In verses 17-48 of chapter 5, Jesus cannot be speaking disparagingly of the Law of Moses or setting Himself and His teaching against Moses' teaching. After all, He authored the Hebrew Scriptures—including the Sabbath (e.g., Matthew 12:8). Why

would He then minimize or ridicule them? He knew that Old Testament commandments were "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12) and extremely vital (Psalms 19:7-11; 119). He knew that the Old Testament would continue to function in useful ways for God's people during the Christian era (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). Negative attitudes about the Old Law arise from misconceptions concerning the Law's function.² Rather than pitting His teaching against Moses' teaching, in reality, Jesus was contrasting, in pointed and impressive fashion, the difference between God's original intentions inherent within Mosaic legislation and **the pharisaical/scribal distortions** of God's law which had collected over the centuries.³

Throughout His discourse on this matter, Jesus does not say, "It

is written" or "Moses said" as He did on other occasions.⁴ Instead, He uses such introductory phrases as "You have heard that it was said to those of old" (5:21) and "You have heard that it was said" (5:38). These ambiguous allusions alert the reader to the existence of a body of rabbinical commentary and interpretation which had gradually accumulated, and which had come to shroud and even contradict original Mosaic legislation. Jesus repeatedly accused the religious leaders of neutralizing the true intent of the Old Law by their misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Scripture (e.g., Matthew 15:3,6; 12:7,12). Consider the following exegetical analysis which shows Jesus did not contradict Moses.

Verses 17-20

Verses 17-20 serve as an introduction to verses 21-48. Verse 20 sets the stage for Jesus' main point, i.e., that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (their doctrine and practice) was not synonymous with true righteousness that pleases God. The Jews possessed religious ardor and enthusiasm (like many who follow worship fads and false religion), but their practice of religion was fraught with ignorance and misconceptions concerning the actual substance and content of proper religious activity (Romans 10:1-3).

Because His teaching was so different from the prevailing approach to religious teaching by the Jewish hierarchy, popular sentiment no doubt held that the teaching of Jesus contradicted the teaching of Moses as represented by the Jewish leadership. Jesus' teaching did, indeed, contradict much of the Jewish religion of His day, but His teaching did not contradict Mosaic teaching. Christ's work was the logical sequel to Old Testament religion.

To clarify this misconception, in one dramatic and sweeping decla-

ration, He reaffirmed His positive relationship to the Old Law: “Do not think that I came to **destroy** the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to **fulfill**” (5:17). His relationship to the Law was not one of destructive opposition but constructive fulfillment. Jesus’ life and work was, in reality, the logical **goal**⁵ of the Law of Moses (Romans 10:4). He brought Old Testament religion to completion and fruition. This obviously meant that Mosaic legislation would soon become “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13) and therefore removed as a legitimate means of approaching God (Hebrews 10:9). But Jesus did not wish to leave the impression that He possessed a negative attitude toward the Old Law. On the contrary, the Old Law was a divine instrument designed to accomplish divine purposes.

We would do well to study carefully three New Testament terms which are used to describe the condition of the Old Covenant. Jesus declared that He did not come to “destroy” (5:17) the Law. *Katalusai* means “to end the effect or validity of something,” to “set at naught,” “to destroy, demolish, overthrow, throw down.”⁶ In other words, Jesus’ life and work was not designed to “put down” or “frustrate” the Law’s plan and purpose. Rather, His mission “fulfilled” or completed the Law. On the other hand, the Old Law as a temporary instrument by which Jews could demonstrate faith was “wiped away” (*exaleipsas*, Colossians 2:14) and therefore invalidated and made powerless (*katargesas*, Ephesians 2:15).⁷ In other words, the Old Law did its job during the time period for which it was intended, but since Jesus has come and done His job, the Old Law is now **unemployed**—out of a job with no further **legal** efficacy and therefore deprived of its influence and power as a specific means of **manifesting** faith.⁸ We no longer need a “super-

visor” or “custodian” (*paidagogos*—Galatians 3:24-25) now that we may be “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). Verse 18 underscores the fact that the Law would remain intact and fully functional until Jesus fulfilled its purpose by offering Himself as the ultimate antidote for man’s estrangement from God. Not one letter nor one tiny stroke of a single letter would pass before fulfillment was achieved.

Armed with this realistic and accurate appraisal of the Old Law, Jesus next stressed to His contemporaries the importance of remaining submissive and obedient to God’s laws given through Moses (5:19). The Jewish leadership in particular was reckless, inconsistent, flippant, and outright disobedient in many areas of God’s law. They both practiced disregard for humble and complete obedience and taught others to do the same. This sorry approach to God’s religion under the Old Testament dispensation would naturally carry over into the New Testament dispensation. Jesus declared such individuals would be “least,” i.e., regarded lightly and with contempt. Those who are “great” in the kingdom are those who hold all of God’s commands in highest regard—even those which men deem insignificant according to human estimation. Unlike those who dismiss complete obedience under the guise of “grace,” those who are “great” in Christ’s kingdom are those who manifest careful sensitivity and diligent concern for compliance with every commandment of God.

But who in Jesus’ day would dare to violate New Testament laws and teach others to do likewise? Obviously, the scribes and Pharisees—the religious authorities of the day. How, specifically, were they doing such? By distorting and misinterpreting the Old Testament law for their own selfish purposes (cf.

Matthew 15:1-9). Consequently, in order for Jesus’ contemporaries to be acceptable to God, their “**righteousness**,” i.e., their religious practice, was going to have to surpass the righteousness of their religious leaders (5:20). That is, those who wished to be pleasing to God were going to have to interpret Mosaic Law properly and act in harmony with it.

Beginning in verse 21, Jesus proceeds to illustrate what it means to “exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.” He does so by alluding to some of the “thicket” that had grown up around original Mosaic legislation. He then delineates the divine intentions underlying several Old Testament issues, depicting the original intent of God’s will on several Mosaic matters.

Jesus fully understood the absolute **goodness** of God’s laws (cf. Deuteronomy 10:13; Psalm 119). As God Himself, He knew God’s laws in every period of human history have been designed to promote spirituality in those who would submit in humble obedience. God’s laws have always been calculated to engender holiness and purity of heart. Jesus’ contemporaries felt that their external, civil emphasis on the Old Law was sufficient, but Jesus maintained that such anemic compliance made void (i.e., neutralized and extricated the original intent and force of) the Word of God through Moses. As a result, Jesus continually condemned mere **external** observance of divine laws (e.g., Matthew 23). He never minimized obedience to the specifics of Mosaic law during His time on Earth. Such an approach is not “legalism.” Jesus’ contemporaries perverted true religion by emphasizing external observance to the exclusion of internal intention.

The common claim that the Law of Moses addressed only the outward action, while Jesus' laws went further by addressing the heart and motives, is an erroneous claim.

Verses 21-26

Jesus next offered another contrast. The matter of murder was dealt with in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). The reference to “danger of the judgment” is not found in the Old Testament. Jesus combines these two quotations in order to emphasize the fact that legislation against murder eventually came to be construed as merely a prohibition against the outward act. Jews, therefore, felt justifiable when they held resentment and anger in their heart toward another just as long as they did not outwardly act on the anger to the extent of murdering. They felt they could comply in action and ignore attitude. But, obviously, God’s law through Moses was not intended only to forbid murder while permitting murderous anger to be harbored within the heart. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament repeatedly condemned feelings of anger and hatred (Leviticus 19:17; Proverbs 24:12,17-18,29; 25:21-22). Thus verses 22-26 constitute Jesus’ exegesis of the meaning of God’s **original legislation** concerning murder without the distortion of years of rabbinic commentary. [NOTE: Observe that the common claim that the Law of Moses addressed only the **outward action**, while Jesus’ laws went further by addressing the heart and motives behind the outward action, is an erroneous claim. Read Leviticus 19:17-18; Proverbs 4:23; 25:21-

22 (quoted by Paul in Romans 12:20).]

Jesus explained that God wanted Jews (and the same carries over for people living today—Christian and non-Christian) to relate to one another in love, harmony, and unity. Verbal expressions of abuse (e.g., “raca” and “fool”) often reflect a heart full of hate. Jesus declared that a hateful attitude is equivalent to murder (cf. 1 John 3:15). “Raca” means “empty head” and is reminiscent of our word “idiot.” Such invectives not only reveal the unkind heart of the user but also deeply injure the individual to whom they are directed. There are certainly times when such words are apropos (e.g., Psalm 14:1; Matthew 23:17). However, Jesus here condemned the harsh, sinful attitude of anger that expresses itself with hostile words of contempt. We humans are so prone to gauge spirituality solely by external action. But God looks upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He sees from whence ugly language and action arises.

We humans also have a tendency to feel we can be right with God and situated within His good graces while being unjustly estranged from our fellowman. Verses 23-24 extend the teaching on anger by noting that homage paid to God is ineffectual as long as we are out of sorts with our brother. If we cannot love our fellowman whom we have seen, we cannot love God whom we have not seen (1 John 4:20). We must not let the Sun go down on our wrath (Ephesians 4:26). If we have done something to another that we should not have done, God wants us to clear up the matter. He will hold us accountable for such at the Judgment and we may be held accountable in this life if the offended individual decides to go to court and sue (5:25-26). The offender would do well to settle the matter with the offended on the way to the courthouse before the judge

rules against the offender and he is tossed in jail! Again, Jesus provided expert commentary on the original import of Mosaic law.

Verses 27-32

Jesus next turned to another legal matter associated with the Law of Moses and Jewish misinterpretation (5:27). In effect, Jesus declared, “You’ve understood the Old Law to forbid merely the outward act of adultery. But I’m telling you that the original law was designed to discourage lust and divorce—items that go hand in hand with adultery.” He then argued (5:28) that when males lust in their hearts after a woman, they’re psychologically committing adultery, the very thing which the Law condemned (cf. 2 Peter 2:14).⁹ A person would do well to completely amputate the member of his body that facilitates such evil (5:29-30; cf. 10:28). Of course, Jesus was not advocating mutilation of the body. Rather, He stressed the seriousness of sin as it rises from the heart and receives impetus from our physical senses. We simply must put to death our members (Colossians 3:5) in this life or face a far greater hardship: eternal hell.

When the Jews chose to misconstrue Deuteronomy 24 to mean they could divorce their wives for any reason, they were further violating the commandment against adultery (5:31). They were responsible for causing their wives to go to other men and thereby commit adultery (5:32). Since the woman had been put away for some reason other than fornication, whoever married her would be guilty of committing adultery as well. Notice that the guideline of Deuteronomy 24 was not a part of original Sinai regulation. It was a concession evoked by hard hearts (Matthew 19:8) and centered—not upon the legality of divorce—but on the rights of the innocent wife.¹⁰

So Jesus was not setting the Law of Moses (“don’t commit adultery”) in opposition to His own teaching (“don’t lust after a woman”). The Old Testament, itself, explicitly forbade lusting after females (Exodus 20:17; Proverbs 5; 6:25; 7:25). Rather, Jesus was explaining that the original law forbidding adultery, by implication, forbade anything that would lead to or contribute to adultery.

Verses 33-37

Next Jesus addressed Himself to His contemporaries’ perversions of the Old Law regarding oaths and swearing. Old Testament passages dealing with oaths¹¹ were calling for honesty and truthful commitment. An oath was merely a formal declaration of intention by the individual. The Old Law possesses no hint whatsoever of differing degrees of determination on the part of the oath-taker. All oaths were to be taken on the basis of God’s presence and culpability before Him.

However, with the passing of time, the Jews had developed an elaborate system of oath-taking which differentiated between levels of intensity based upon various objects (e.g., heaven, Earth, Jerusalem, hair). The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had gotten to the point where the validity of an oath depended—not upon the truthfulness of the individual—but upon the sacredness of the object by which one swore. Jesus condemned such frivolous politicking and reaffirmed the original intent of divine will: tell the truth under all circumstances. After all, God is over every single object to which one might appeal to validate his oath. So all oaths ought to be simply above-board affirmations of truth in light of God’s omnipresence. James echoed the same teaching (James 5:12). Jesus, therefore, was not forbidding judicial oaths that amount to simple “yes” or “no”

affirmations of truth. He was forbidding swearing by objects with a view to escaping a straightforward declaration of truth.

Verses 38-42

Our Lord’s next allusion was to the *lex talionis* of Mosaic law which tailored penalties and punishment to fit the crime (5:38).¹² The Old Testament passages which treated this matter¹³ were originally intended to promote just retribution, prescribing appropriate penalty for crimes committed against one’s fellowman. These prescriptions were, therefore, restraining measures designed to set limits on punishment while demonstrating God’s view of sin and wrong. The *lex talionis* reflected God’s humane justice and assisted man in nurturing a healthy view regarding what constitutes appropriate response to man’s inappropriate and injurious behavior. In addition, the “eye for an eye” dictum functioned as a deterrent which discouraged a wrong doer from ever risking his own person by inflicting harm upon the person of another.¹⁴

In time, Jewish sentiments perceived the *lex talionis* as a way to “get back” at an assailant. They regarded this law as a way to secure revenge rather than as a merciful, benevolent restriction. In this way, anger and malice were encouraged rather

than discouraged as God intended. In much the same way, our society seems gripped by an insatiable desire to sue anybody and everybody for any and everything. The spirit of revenge and greed is rampant in American culture. The misuse and abuse of our judicial system has made a mockery of laws which were originally intended to facilitate just recompense. Now the system thrives on the spirit of vengeful retaliation by the citizenry and the greed of their lawyers—a tragic distortion of justice. We are in need of the same verbal correctives that Jesus issued to the Jews.

Jesus declared what was in God’s mind in the original Mosaic expression. While laws must exist which discourage and punish the perpetual lawbreakers as well as protect the innocent (1 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 13:1-7), God wants individuals to love and live in harmony with one another, and to forgive one another when mistakes are made. Consequently, the believer ought to “resist not him that is evil” (5:39). By way of explanation for such a bold statement, Jesus cites three specific situations which illustrate what He meant by nonresistance: (1) turn the other cheek, (2) relinquish the cloak, and (3) go the second mile (5:39-41).

Notice that in each of these cases, Jesus was bringing into focus, not so much the specific situation, but

(cont. on p. 8)

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN:**[1542-0922] **USPS#** 023415.

Apologetics Press is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2024. All rights reserved.

Editor & Associate Editor:

Eric Lyons, M.Min.
Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*
(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

Annual Subscription Rates:

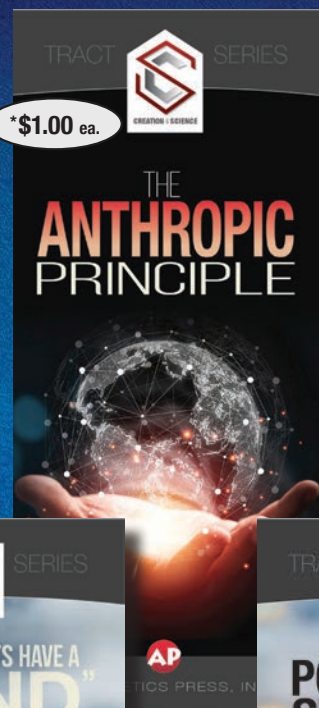
\$14.00	Domestic & Overseas (OVERSEAS: ADD SHIPPING)
\$12.00	Domestic Bulk (5+ TO SAME ADDRESS)

Orders, Inquiries, & Address Changes:

Phone:	(334) 272-8558
Web:	store.apologeticspress.org
E-mail:	mail@apologeticspress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery website at: www.DiscoveryMagazine.org

SHARING TRUTH MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE



AP Tract Series:

Adult/Teen:

- Creation & Science tracts
- Digging Deeper tracts
- Dismantling Evolution tracts
- Reasons to Believe tracts
- Regular trifold tracts

*\$1.00
tracts are
12-40 pages
in length



SCAN QR code for a com-
prehensive listing of ALL
AP tracts, or go to

Store.ApologeticsPress.org



NEW TRACTS

For Teens and Adults

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

5 Different | **QR Code Accessible.** | **Purchase**
Tract Series | Scan directly to phone | Online

*Don't want to carry around a paper tract? Purchase the tract, **scan the QR code** on the back, and have the entire tract downloaded onto your phone.*



Apologetics Press
Reasons to Believe Tract Series:
21 Reasons to Believe the Earth is Young



The Bible implies that the Earth is around 6,000-10,000 years old, while the conventional belief held by many is that the Earth is 4.5 billion years old. Is the Bible wrong about the age of the Earth? Abundant evidence exists from the disciplines of paleontology, archaeology, geology, astrophysics, and geophysics which supports the biblical frame, while refuting deep time.

QR CODE TO PURCHASE THIS TRACT

Apologetics Press, Inc.

Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117
272-8558

Article © 2019 - Tract © 2023 - All Rights Reserved

APOLLOGETICSPRESS.ORG

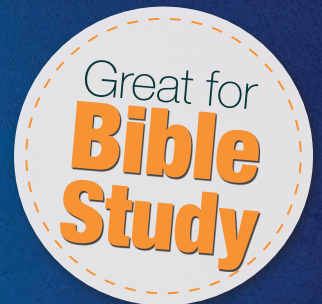
AP's REASONS TO BELIEVE
TRACT SERIES

21 Reasons to Believe the
Earth is Young

SCAN QR
code to view
this tract on
your device.



APOLLOGETICSPRESS.ORG



**SCAN the QR
code to view
tract on your
phone**



the **attitude** which underlies these three situations. This is precisely where scribal thought was defective. We must capture the attitude of heart inherent in these examples in order to apply properly the teaching which Jesus is here enjoining to the myriad of circumstances which we face throughout life. We tend to want to minimize and diffuse the potency of Jesus' words in these examples in order to leave ourselves free to take vengeance when we see fit. While we would not deny that there are appropriate times when a Christian can rightfully defend himself (e.g., Acts 16:36-38; 22:25; 25:10-11), we ought to be extremely careful that we do not become guilty of the very spirit which Jesus condemned: the spirit of revenge and retaliation. By the time we get finished explaining what Jesus did **not** mean by "turn the other cheek," we may well have completely neutralized what Jesus **did** mean.

Jesus, Himself, is the supreme and definitive example of what it means "not to resist an evil person" (vs. 39). He gently tolerated the abuse directed against Him personally—a point which Peter drives home with penetrating poignancy (1 Peter 2:21-23). Notice that this pronouncement against resistance is explained by several parallel New Testament phrases: (1) Romans 12:19—"give place to wrath" (i.e., step aside and allow God to retaliate in His own way in His own good time); (2) 1 Corinthians 4:12—"being persecuted, we suffer it" (i.e., we endure or tolerate the mistreatment rather than lash out at our persecutors); (3) 1 Peter 2:19-20—"endure grief, suffering wrongfully" and "take it patiently" (i.e., bear up under unwarranted abuse without retaliating); (4) 1 Peter 2:23—"reviled not....threatened not but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (i.e., Jesus took the blows without react-

ing spitefully or vengefully); and (5) Romans 12:17—"Recompense to no man evil for evil" (i.e., do not fall prey to natural human inclination to reciprocate when mistreated).

Paul addressed in Romans 12 essentially the same point which Jesus addressed in Matthew 5. To do so, Paul appeals to the Old Testament—further underscoring the fact that Jesus was upholding and defending the Old Law in the

The formula "hate your enemy" is not found in Scripture and was clearly a distortion of God's Old Law in order to accommodate human inclination.

Sermon on the Mount. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21-22 to emphasize to the Christian the same point that God and Christ wanted the Old Testament Jew to recognize, i.e., that vengeance and retaliation are out of harmony with God's will and that returning good for evil is the appropriate course of action for those who love God.

Whether the child of God faces physical violence, judicial injustice, or governmental oppression, he will "bend over backwards" to accommodate and avoid altercation. He will sincerely and genuinely care for those who mistreat him (cf. Acts 7:60). He will be less concerned for self-preservation and more concerned for the welfare of his fellowman (cf. Luke 10:30-37). Rather than being guarded, defensive, selfish, and "tight" with "our" things, we will be open, liberal, generous, and benevolent (Proverbs 21:26; Luke 6:38). Jesus summarized verses 38-41 by advancing a positive declaration in verse 42: "Give to him who asks you, and from him who

wants to borrow from you do not turn away." This command is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 15:7-11. Study this Old Testament passage very carefully, for it proves conclusively, not only what Jesus enjoins regarding returning good for evil, but that Old Testament religion also addressed the heart, the attitude, and the motives which underlie our external behaviors.

Verses 43-48

The final paragraph of chapter 5 pertains to the mixture of Mosaic legislation and tradition regarding treatment of enemies. The phrase "love your neighbor" is found in Leviticus 19:18 but the formula "hate your enemy" is not found in Scripture and was clearly a distortion of God's Old Law in order to accommodate human inclination. In fact, kind treatment of enemies is commanded in the Old Testament (Exodus 23:4-5). It is true that God wanted the Jewish nation to execute righteous vengeance upon wicked, pagan societies at various points in history (cf. Romans 13:1-7). But these civil decrees were not intended to endorse, sanction, or promote hatred of people out of personal bias.

On at least two separate occasions, Jesus Himself made clear that the original Mosaic injunction to "love your neighbor" meant that the child of God should seek the welfare of everybody—including his enemy. On one occasion, He identified Leviticus 19:18 as the "second" greatest commandment of the Old Law (Matthew 22:39). On another occasion, He elaborated upon this command by relating the incident of the "Good Samaritan" and showing that our "neighbor" is anyone, regardless of ethnicity, who needs our assistance (Luke 10:25-27). Jesus deliberately selected a Samaritan—a mortal enemy of the Jew—as the "hero" of this narrative in order to emphasize

that loving one's neighbor encompasses even enemies. Stephen (Acts 7:59-60) also epitomized the essence of Matthew 5:44.

Fathers, who have a particularly talented son or daughter who accomplishes some significant feat, are prone to express their pride in their offspring by ribbing a friend with their elbow, pointing at their performing child, and saying, "That's my son." In like manner, God's children (5:45) are those who "do Him proud" by treating the wicked antagonist in a loving manner. Indeed, this attitudinal ingredient is representative of God Himself. The bestowal of His physical blessings (i.e., sunshine and rain—vs. 45; cf. Acts 14:17) are extended even to those who do not deserve them. God is kind even to the unthankful and the evil (Luke 6:35).

Not only does beneficial reciprocity make us like God, it makes us unlike the ungodly. Even the impatient and willful tax collectors and Gentiles (*teloni, ethnikai*) manifest kindness, love, and friendly greetings toward their own kind. That is, the traitorous and greedy tax collector and the non-Jew—both of whom Jesus' hearers would regard as degenerate—possessed a measure of "love" and good will. But the follower of God goes beyond normal, typical, worldly human inclinations by transcending them to attain the higher place of spiritual living.

Finally, Jesus encapsulates in brief, terse terminology a fitting finish to these thoughts on God's will regarding love for fellowman. He calls upon the Jews (and Christians today) to be "perfect" in the same fashion that God is "perfect" (5:48). The term *teleioi* does not refer to perfection in the sense of sinlessness. Rather, "perfect" means "mature," "full-grown," "being fully developed in a moral sense."¹⁵ In context, Jesus is opposing the fragmented approach which the Jews

were taking in their interpersonal relationships. Their love for neighbor was divided and incomplete. They needed to love their enemies as well as their friends. On this basis, they are admonished to be complete in the same fashion that God is complete. He loves the whole world of humanity—including those who are evil (John 3:16). In like manner, the love which Jews were to have for their fellowman was to be full, whole, and complete. Their love was to be a total love, extending even to enemies.

CONCLUSION

ACAREFUL, verse-by-verse analysis of Matthew 5 demonstrates that, far from denigrating the Law of Moses, Jesus declared to His contemporaries the logical goal of that Law, i.e., Himself. Not only did He **not** criticize the Mosaic system, He, Himself, conformed to its precepts perfectly (cf. Hebrews 4:15). He urged all other Jews to do the same. Rather than speaking derisively of the Law, or contradicting the Law, Jesus provided masterful commentary on a variety of legal matters that the Jewish hierarchy had distorted and misrepresented in their leadership role responsibilities. He challenged His contemporaries (and all of us) to go beyond the mere mechanical implementation of God's laws. We are encouraged to realize the full potential of the vibrant, life-giving guidelines of the Creator in our lives. **We are called upon to refrain from distorting the will of God and neutralizing divine intent.** We are commanded to possess a righteousness that exceeds the petty, diluted, watered-down religion of those who have lost sight of what God intends for our souls. He wants us to be "happy" in a way that people will never be happy—unless they mold their hearts, minds, and lives around the potent and powerful truths of the eternal God. No, Jesus did not con-

tradict or demean the Law of Moses. Rather, He upheld it.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See *The Anvil Rings* series available from Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/pdf-books/>, as well as a host of books through the centuries that effectively answer the skeptics' allegations.
- ² Cf. Romans 3:19-20; 7:7,12,14; Galatians 3:21. Study Gordon Ferguson's discussion of the interrelationship of grace, law, and love in Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, eds. (1978), *God Demands Doctrinal Preaching* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press), pp. 225-236. Certainly, the Old Law was inadequate (Hebrews 8:7) to accomplish God's ultimate objective on Earth. As the Hebrews writer declared so often, the New Testament with all of its attendant elements is "better" (Hebrews 1:4; 6:9; 7:7,19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16,35,40; 12:24) than the Mosaic system that preceded it. But this is so for the reason that the Mosaic law **was not designed** to do what Christ's law could do. The seeming denigrations in the New Testament of the Law are actually directed at the **misconceptions** and **improper attitudes** which many of the Jews possessed about the Law. How unfortunate that anyone would latch on to these negative descriptions and then draw the equally false conception that Christians are not under law or obligated to be involved in meticulous obedience.
- ³ This contrast continues on into chapter 6 where He includes corrective comments pertaining to benevolent giving (6:1-4), prayer (6:5-15), fasting (6:16-18), and materialism (6:19-34).
- ⁴ Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:3; 12:26; Luke 24:27; John 3:14; 5:45-46; 7:19ff.
- ⁵ The Greek term in Romans 10:4 (*telos*) refers to the fact that Christ (the plan He implemented) is the "end," i.e., goal/aim/purpose/climax/target, of the law. In his 1985 *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 541, Hermann Cremer observed that the word "does not, as is commonly supposed, primarily denote the **end, termination**, with reference to time, but the **goal reached, the completion or conclusion** at which anything arrives, either as **issue** or **ending**, and thus including the termination of what went before," emp. in orig.
- ⁶ Frederick Danker (2000), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chi-

ago, IL: University of Chicago), third edition, p. 522; James Moulton and George Milligan (1930), *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982 reprint), p. 329; Robert Mounce (2006), *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 1183.

⁷ Danker, pp. 344,525.

⁸ This is not to say that the Old Testament has no value to the Christian. Paul stated emphatically that it is extremely relevant to the Christian Era—Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; et al. Rather, the Old Covenant was addressed specifically to the Israelites—not Gentiles—and it reached its climactic pinnacle at the cross. Now, under Christianity, all human beings—Jew and Gentile—are amenable to the terms of the New Covenant.

⁹ Of course, Jesus was **not** saying that lust is exactly equivalent to adultery and, thus, grounds for divorce. He was simply noting that lust and adultery are both sinful. The adultery that is just grounds for divorce (Matthew 19:9) refers to the **physical act**—even as murder refers to the **physical act** of taking another person's life.

¹⁰ See Jack P. Lewis (1978), "From the Beginning It Was Not So..." in *Your Marriage Can Be Great*, ed. Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press), pp. 410-419. See also Dave Miller (2020), "Did Moses Command Divorce? (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)," <https://apologeticspress.org/did-moses-command-divorce-deuteronomy-241-4-5880/>.

¹¹ Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 5:11; 23:21-23.

¹² "At a deeper level the talion is understood to state an aesthetic principle of poetic justice, in which the core idea is the exactitude of the fit, the perfection of the matching. Let the punishment fit the crime"—William Miller (2006), *Eye for an Eye* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 65.

¹³ Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

¹⁴ "It shut the door to unlimited revenge and kept the punishment from exceeding the crime"—Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, eds. (2001), "V" in *The Oxford Guide to Ideas & Issues of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press).

¹⁵ Danker, pp. 995-996.

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Eric Lyons

Q: If God is all-loving and all-powerful, then why did Jesus have to die in order for God to forgive sins?

A: The Bible reveals that God *is* all-loving and all-powerful, but He is not *only* all-loving and all-powerful. That is, God is not a mere one- or two-sided Being. God is perfect in *all* of His attributes, including His holiness. God is 100% pure and holy. He is holy in the absolute sense. "The Lord is upright;... there is *no* unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:15). "God is light and in Him is *no* darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The psalmist proclaimed of God: "No evil dwells with You" (5:4, NASB). Not one smidgen of sin can dwell in God or with God because even an iota of evil is against His innately pure and holy nature. Indeed, the "Lord God Almighty" is "holy, holy, holy" (Revelation 4:8; Isaiah 6:3).¹

In addition to God's perfectly *holy* nature is His infinitely *just* nature. God's "work is perfect; for *all His ways are justice*, a God of truth and *without injustice*; righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4). The psalmist declared to God: "Righteousness and justice

are the foundation of Your throne" (89:14). Unlike earthly judges who often falter in the administration of justice, God "shows no partiality nor takes a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17). A corrupt judge allows the guilty to go unpunished, while a just judge pronounces righteous judgment upon lawbreakers (cf. Colossians 3:25).

God's perfect *holiness* makes fellowship with wickedness literally impossible. God's perfect *justice* requires punishment for any evil doing. Sin is so atrocious to God that the penalty for violating His law is death—an eternal separation from Him (Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4). Every accountable human being at some point sins against God (Romans 3:10,23). We sin and thus separate ourselves from our holy Creator. We find ourselves (of our own doing) "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). We are lost in sin, "having no hope and without God" (Ephesians 2:12). And, as sinners, we have *no power* to save ourselves. There is *nothing* we can do. There is no plan that we could devise to escape the punishment from a perfectly holy and just God. A price *must* be paid for sin.



THIS is why Jesus came to Earth. He did not have to; *He chose to. He came to satisfy God's own (His own) perfect holiness and justice.* "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). He willingly chose to pay the ultimate price for our sins, demonstrating that God is not only holy and just; *He is love* (1 John 4:8)! And, "[g]reater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

God's perfect love compelled Jesus to take our punishment upon Himself. "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).... [I]n Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the *blood* of Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5,13). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God's perfect holiness and justice demand that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But thanks be to God, that is not the end of the story! (At least it does not have to be.) What does the rest of Romans 6:23 say? "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, God is both "*just*" and "*the justifier*"² of the souls of human-

ity through the one and only sinless answer to the sin problem—Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:15), Whose sole purpose in coming to Earth was to save the souls of sinful humankind (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10).

The most illogical, heart-wrenching, and terrible thing that a lost-in-sin human being can do is spurn the invitation from our loving God to accept the free gift of eternal salvation through Jesus.³ On the other hand, the two greatest things we can do with the one physical life that we have is (1) accept and follow Jesus, Who is the "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6); and (2) tell others about why our Savior came to Earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:4; Romans 1:16).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ God's almighty (all-powerful) nature does not contradict His holiness since God's omnipotence does not mean He can do anything and everything. Scripture is clear, for example, that God "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Thus, the Bible's teaching on the

omnipotence of God is that He can do anything (1) that is logically possible to be done (e.g., He cannot create a square circle), and (2) that is in harmony with His holy will. [For more information, see Dave Miller (2009), "Things God Cannot Do," <https://apologeticspress.org/things-god-cannot-do-1240/>.]

- ² Through a trusting, biblical faith *in Jesus*, God made us "just" (or "right") in the eyes of a perfectly just God (Romans 3:26).

- ³ To learn more about receiving the gift of salvation and becoming a follower of Christ, see AP's free booklet at <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Receiving-the-Gift-of-Salvation.pdf>.



ApologeticsPress.org

Search... Apologetics Press

For more articles like these, visit us online.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

May 8	Pulaski, TN	(931) 363-2777
May 15	Florence, AL	(256) 757-5126
June 2-7	Oakman, AL	(334) 272-8558
June 11	Columbia, TN	(931) 381-0598

Eric Lyons

May 3-5	Clinton, IL	(217) 935-5058
May 24-26	Estes Park, CO	(303) 688-9065
May 29	Centerville, TN	(931) 729-5356
June 5	Milan, TN	(731) 686-7561

Dave Miller

May 5	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
May 26-30	Branson, MO	(417) 334-3866
June 4	Oakman, AL	(334) 272-8558
June 7-9	Dallas, TX	(972) 279-6186

Jeff Miller

May 3-5	Vista, CA	(760) 758-8430
May 19	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
May 26-June 1	Branson, MO	(417) 334-3866
June 2-7	Oakman, AL	(334) 272-8558



NOTE FROM *The Editor*



The Power (of God) in a Pamphlet

You never know what kind of eternal impact a pamphlet will have on a person. Last month, AP received an encouraging letter from a public school teacher who said:

When I was a freshman in high school..., the back table at our small church in south Florida had AP material on it. My biology teacher that year was a self-proclaimed atheist. She was an intellectual with a good sense of humor, and very down to earth. She made some "good points" in class that made me start questioning my faith. The pamphlets and articles that I remember first catching my eye on that foyer table were titled "How Old is the Earth?" and "Were Dinosaurs on the Ark?" So I started reading. And reading. I read everything I could get my hands on... My faith continued asking questions and every one of them was answered.

Apologetics Press will always hold a special place in my heart and soul because of the path it set my feet on. I went on to...major in education, and have taught 7th grade science for 10 years. I have been able to share my love for God's creative design in the public classroom without teaching "religion." I encourage my students to keep their minds open. I tell them to ask questions until they find answers that truly make sense. And, I have made AP materials available to my students to pick up "if they are interested." I love my students and they know it. They also know about my faith and



love for God. My classroom is one of my favorite places to be. It is a mission field.

Without the answers AP has published over these many years, I could not confidently stand and teach science in a public classroom today. I would be conflicted between my faith and science. But God created science. The two aren't opposites. The heavens declare His glory. Not to mention the cells and the atoms, too.

What kind of materials are you and your local congregation making available to precious souls searching for answers? Why not check out some of AP's newest pamphlets, which could be of assistance in your efforts to teach the lost and edify the saved?

Eric Lyons

See Center Spread for More Details